

GODS AND MORTALS
IN LOVE .



GODS AND MORTALS IN LOVE

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for
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A book with coloured pictures and an illustrated book are not quite the same thing. One may say that each has its own function and its own appeal.

This is presented as a book with coloured pictures.

EDMUND DULAC.

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Gods

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A P H R O D I T E .
a n d .
A D O N I S

Aphrodite and Adonis

ALL the flowers were not created at the same time and many generations of men lived and died who had never seen the anemone blooming in the woods. Those were the years when Aphrodite (whom the Romans called Venus) knew only the pleasures of love and when its pain was still hidden even from her, its goddess. For the anemone is the symbol of the agony of Aphrodite.

She found love on Olympûs a sufficiently pleasant diversion. Her husband, Hephæstus, who was lame and ill-favoured, troubled her little and, as the marriage had been forced on her by the rancour of Zeus, her right to other amusement was generally conceded. Even when she was publicly discovered in the arms of Ares, the god of war, Olympian opinion remained in her favour. If other goddesses occasionally showed disapproval she attributed it—not unjustly—to envy, and found in it an additional source of gratification. Nor were the conquests of her beauty confined to Olympus. She visited the kingdom of the sea, her birthplace, and there captivated Poseidon himself. But he, no more than Hephæstus or Ares or Dionysos or Hermes, was able to hold her. When she had tired of him she determined to live for a while on earth.

She first saw Adonis as he was resting from the noon-day

heat by a stream in the woods. A shaft of sunlight, piercing the leaves, had tangled itself in the curls of his hair. She noted with approval the grace and the slim strength of him. The curve of his wrist as his hand trailed idly in the water pleased her. She stole closer and, seeing the beauty of his face, knew that she desired him. The conquest, she judged, would be no difficult matter, but in that she was mistaken.

Adonis noticed her coming towards him, but considered it of little account. He was thinking of the boar which had escaped him in the chase and debating in which direction it would be best to ride when he was sufficiently refreshed. He was wondering, also, whether Apollo had noticed his skill that morning and whether, when evening came, he would visit him. For each day as Adonis rode through the woods the Sun God, circling the sky in his chariot, watched him, and at nightfall, when Artemis, his sister, guarded the world in his stead, he would often steal down secretly to earth to hold converse with Adonis. Many things had Adonis learnt from him, but chiefly of the grandeur of poetry and song, of the healing of wounds by the herbs of the field, of the might of the spoken word to move the minds of men and of the art of hunting. But of the love of women Apollo had never spoken. Nor did Adonis find its power in his own heart, for his mother and her story had made him distrust all womankind.

Aphrodite awaited his greeting. Finding him silent, she attributed it to the natural embarrassment of a mortal in the presence of a divinity and hastened to put him at his ease. He

was not, she thought, sufficiently impressed when he learnt her identity. On his part, being conscious of his friendship with the god Apollo, he considered her condescension less in the light of a signal honour than of an annoying interruption. Nevertheless he inquired courteously what service he could render her. She assured him that she sought nothing but the pleasure of his company and the delight of his conversation for awhile. But, though he began to speak with eloquence and charm of the joys of art and the excitements of hunting, he suspected that he won her interest in neither. She seemed more intrigued by the circumstance that when his fingers met hers unexpectedly in the water he withdrew his hand from the stream. And when at last he rose and begged leave to continue on his way, Aphrodite, imprisoning his ankles, rallied him that he should wish to flee from Love herself. Adonis, unable to find an answer that was not impolite, sat down again.

As the afternoon shadows lengthened, she used her wiles to the utmost. She flattered him and threatened; she was contemptuous and mended her contempt with caresses. She who by a smile had brought the god of war to his knees, pleaded to this boy in vain. Evening was falling before she abandoned hope and then one thought only was in her mind—to prevent him from continuing the chase. She dreaded the dangers that lurked in the half-light. But Adonis, having spent a distasteful afternoon, was in no mood to be robbed of this pleasure. He knew as well as she the perils of it, but he was confident of his skill in avoiding them. He needed, too, the excitement of it to

purge his memory. Impatiently he escaped from her arms and mounted his horse.

When he was free of her, his joy returned. He welcomed the clean wind that chafed his face and the sting of the small branches that whipped his forehead as he tore his way through the thicker glades. But to her, left desolate, the wind seemed only a mournful echo of her own sighs and the branches, beckoning with elusive mockery just beyond her reach, were as cool and remote as the hands of Adonis. . . .

He was killed not far from the spot where Aphrodite had met him. His horse, exhausted by the relentless pace, had stumbled at an obstacle and before Adonis could recover from the fall the boar, savagely at bay, made in his side a wound that no herbs could heal. His cries of pain, ringing through the forest, brought the goddess hot-foot to his aid, but he was dead before she found him.

Kneeling by the lifeless boy she gave rein to her wild grief, calling the name of Adonis till it seemed that the earth could hear no other sound. But on Olympus none heard it but Apollo : and Aphrodite, because her eyes were closed with sorrow, did not see the flower which he caused to spring up from the life-blood of his friend.

So, the ancients said, the anemone bears eternal witness to the pain of love unrequited in life and the agony of love ended by death. To which sorrows the Goddess of Love herself has been subject.

S E L E N E

a n d

E N D Y M I O N



Selene and Endymion

THE shepherds who tended their flocks on the lower slopes of Latmos never ventured near the mountain's peak. That was dangerous ground of which strange tales were told. The older among them had heard the story from their fathers (who themselves had been companions of Endymion), but it was doubtful whether even they knew the full truth of it. The younger ones, scornful of omniscience, agreed that there was no certainty about the matter and openly debated rival theories. On one point only were they of one mind. All refused to invade the sanctuary since the night when one, more intrepid than the rest, had dared enchantment. They had found him at dawn blind and speechless and had carried him back to the village to die. Although they were assured by the elders that in an earlier expedition no harm had come to the seekers, they judged that in their generation the matter was best left alone.

Endymion of all the Karian shepherds was the most comely. But, though beauty is a lively cause of envy, his indifference to it and his modesty made him a general favourite. He excelled in manly sports and men sought his company for his wit and merriment. Yet even when most he jested or when, for the joy of living, he exulted in the feats of hardihood to which he had trained his body, his eyes mirrored some dim dream that his

comrades could neither understand nor share. And often, when the wine ran freely or the night fires were bright with friendliness, he would steal away from tavern or hillside camp and climb alone to the mountain top to sit gazing at the cold sky. In the morning his companions would gravely tell one another that he was enamoured of the moon, or they would inquire whether, tired of tending his own sheep, he was imploring Zeus to make him herdsman of the stars. But he was unperturbed by taunts and unkind to inquisitiveness. And he opened his heart to none.

One day he did not return. Towards evening some of the shepherds, fearing for his safety, went in search of him. But on the heights was no sign of life, and though the seekers called Endymion's name loudly, no answer came back to them but the echo of it. Apprehensive, they began to search more thoroughly. At last they found him lying on a flower-starred bank in the shadow of a great tree, in a sleep so deep that neither sound nor movement could awaken him and only his gentle breathing assured them that he still lived. They prepared to carry him back to the shelter of his hut, but as they stooped in readiness to lift him, they were overcome by a nameless terror. It was as if all nature around them whispered angrily a warning against sacrilege. Here, they realized, was a matter beyond their meddling. They left Endymion to his sleep.

Years afterwards one of that company returned to the place. The ascent took him some hours, for his enfeebled limbs needed many rests by the way. But when at last he gained the summit, his dim eyes, peering for the remembered landmarks, perceived

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Endymion still lying asleep, his smooth cheek resting on his arm, his youthful curls in disorder and, on his lips, the ghost of a mocking smile. He had not aged by an hour. The old man, plucking at his white beard, stumbled away, muttering toothlessly of witchcraft. Nor thereafter did anyone venture to Endymion's hiding-place and return in safety.

Some said, when the story was discussed, that Endymion by ceaseless importuning Zeus had gained from the Father of Gods and Men the promise of whatever gift he desired, and that, being so in love with youth and dreams, he had chosen to stay immortally young, wrapped in an eternal sleep. Others said that his strange slumber was no reward, but a punishment for having gazed into the secrets of the heavens. There were even those who hinted that Hera, Queen of the Gods, had visited him during his lone watchings on Latmos, so that Zeus, enraged, had given him death for his presumption. But Hera from pity and some gratitude had changed death into a sleep. For the most part, however, men repeated the old story with which they had taunted Endymion in life—that he was in love with the moon.

And that indeed was the truth of the matter. Endymion, during those nights of solitary watchfulness, had been overcome by the beauty of Selene, Goddess of the Moon. At first he had cared only for the vastness of the night's silence, finding in its peace and grandeur a fitting universe for his dreams. But then he had noticed how the touch of moonlight turned to loveliness things that daylight made commonplace. His senses were stirred

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by the cold silver of the leaves and the enticement of the soft shadows. If the goddess could bestow such beauty, must she not herself be beautiful? Night after night his eyes strained to pierce the mystery which distance hid and in his heart he created an image of her to inspire his dreaming.

Selene, watching the earth, was not indifferent to her worshipper. One night she descended to Latmos, having first overwhelmed Endymion with sleep, lest he should be overcome with fear at her advent. When he awoke he found her bending over him, smiling. But she was not like his dream. There he had seen her proud and remote with the wisdom of the ages in her eyes; here was a slim girl, trembling towards him. He had imagined a goddess who might deign to accept his adoration; he found a friend, ready to share his laughter. His arms held a willing prisoner.

And for Endymion the happiness was endless. For he did not know that in a few short hours she cast round him a veil of sleep and departed from his side. Nor did he see her when at night she returned, her feet hidden in soft clouds and her head circled with light, to take back the veil and watch his gradual awakening. So over him time had lost its power and the minute became eternity. And Selene, continuing her labours, presiding over the ever-changing season, returned always to that which her power had made changeless—the love and youth and beauty of Endymion.

No one, neither god nor man, disturbed their happiness.

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The impious shepherd who dared intrude was blinded by the naked radiance of the moon and struck dumb by the angry goddess lest he should reveal to others what his eyes had last looked upon. Thus men knew nothing but that Endymion slept unceasingly, and ignorant of the beauty made his name into a proverb. A sluggard, they said, "slept as long as Endymion."

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Pluto and Persephone

AFTER Cronus, father of the High Gods, Lord of all the Universe, was overthrown, his sons, Zeus, Poseidon and Pluto, cast lots for their inheritance. To Zeus fell the kingdom of the heavens and the lordship of gods and living men ; Poseidon gained the rulership of the sea. Thus for Pluto there remained only the house of Hades, the grim region unlit by the sun, visited only by the dead. There he reigned, feared by men, shunned by the gods. His throne was set at the meeting-place of the four rivers of his kingdom—Lethe, whose waters brought forgetfulness of the joys of earth ; and Phlegethon, the river of fire ; and Cocytus, the slow-moving river of lamentation ; and Acheron, the river of great bitterness.

At his feet crouched the triple-headed watch-dog, Cerberus. Behind him the Harpies, with women's faces and vultures' bodies, moved restlessly. At his right hand sat the three Fates holding, one the distaff, one the spindle, one the scissors, wherewith the thread of each man's life was begun and ended. At his left hand were the Furies, ministers of his vengeance, whose hair was a nest of serpents and in whose hands were whips of scorpions. But no consort shared the throne of the Dark God. Himself deaf to entreaty, he had found no goddess to heed his entreaties ; unmoved by pity, he was pitied by none. Yet Pluto had no mind to endure his outlawry for ever ; if no daughter of the gods

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would consent to become Queen of the Land of the Dead he would take by force what he could not obtain by fairer means.

On the plains of Enna, Persephone, daughter of Demeter, was gathering flowers. The mortals of that valley knew that the Maiden-Goddess had come among them, because the fields were so heavy with grain and the trees were weighed down under the burden of their fruit ; because the wine ran more freely and the colours of the flowers shone with greater splendour. For Demeter, the Earth-Mother, so loved her daughter that she rewarded by a larger share of her bounties whatever region was pleasing to Persephone. And the Earth and Persephone were lovers. The flowers vied one with another for the grace of her touch ; the grass, pressed by her feet, welcomed the pain of it ; the rivers folded her body in their cool caresses to protect it from the noon-day heat, and in the listless afternoon the trees guarded her sleep with their shade. All living things gave her pleasure, and the moods of the sky and the unceasing song of water, the colours and scents of plain and woodland were to her more than the golden hoard of the gods ; more precious than the rare jewels of the goddesses was a handful of wild flowers from the fields of Enna.

But on that morning when happiness ended for her, the earth was powerless to warn her of the coming menace, for no whisper of evil disturbed its serene peace. Usually the approach of disaster would be felt by all nature and portents would be mirrored in the sky and chanted by the trembling sea and mut-

tered by winds hurrying. But Pluto struck too suddenly for such warning. Nevertheless, when she considered it later, Persephone thought that Arethusa, her favourite fountain-nymph, had perhaps divined it. She had been telling of the Kingdom of Hades (whither once she had been pursued by Alpheus, a river-god). As she leapt high into the sunlight she sang to Persephone of the land where no sun was, where instead of flowers gleamed only the hard brightness of precious stones. Persephone, except for smiling at the strangeness of those who prized an onyx above the anemone, had scarcely heeded her, but had run off, laughing happily, to weave a crown of violets and asphodel.

So Pluto found her. At his command the earth at her feet parted to make way for his chariot, drawn by the two horses of night. The great beasts, plunging wildly in the unaccustomed light, were held in check by the god's right hand alone. Even in that moment of terror when she turned and saw him, Persephone noticed approvingly his strength. Before she could cry out his other arm, like an iron band, had closed round her body and she knew herself Death's prisoner.

Pluto had not meant it to be like that. Against hope he had still hoped to plead his cause, to win Persephone by persuasion, to touch her pity, even to stir her love. He had half-believed that she might understand his need and willingly offer the radiance of her presence to lighten the gloom of Hades. But the startled fear in her eyes told him that no words and no art would be of any avail. He must take her by force, swiftly. In a second the earth had closed behind him. Pluto and Persephone

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had vanished and the plain lay as peacefully as before under the morning sky. But all the flowers were dead.

Arethusa, who alone had seen the carrying-off of Persephone, told Demeter all the circumstances of it. The Earth-Mother, stricken with grief, unceasingly called on Zeus for vengeance against Pluto. She withdrew from earth her blessing, so that the crops withered and the trees bore no fruit and men died of famine. But Zeus was powerless against his brother, for Persephone had eaten of the fruit of Hades and so became subject to the Dark God. Yet for the honour of the gods—because men, finding their prayers and sacrifices impotent to avert famine and plague, were ceasing in reverence and the right performances of their dues—Pluto agreed that every year for a season Persephone should be restored to her mother to wander again the fields of Enna, but for the rest she must reign by his side as Queen of the Land of the Dead.

So, men said, winter came upon the earth. Before the carrying-away of Persephone spring was eternal, but now every year when the goddess returns as subject to her lord the land becomes barren and life sleeps.

P S Y C H E

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Psyche and Cerberus

T the gate of the palace of Persephone, Queen of the Land of the Dead, Psyche halted in terror. It was not that she was suddenly surprised, for she had known that Cerberus would bar her path ; nor did she seriously question her safety, for she knew that, so long as she was obedient to the counsel given her, the monster would not harm her. But now that she in truth faced him, the horror of his physical appearance appalled her—the three avid mouths, the poison-filled claws, the foul skin where curled snakes whose hisses mingled with his raucous baying to make music for Hades. She was, she remembered, only the third being with a living body who had looked on Cerberus. Before her had come Herakles, who had subdued him by force, and Orpheus, who had subdued him by beauty ; but she who came now to violate the sanctuary of Death had neither the hero's strength nor the musician's gift. She was but an unfortunate girl crushed by the wrath of Aphrodite and armed against Cerberus with nothing more than a barley-cake soaked in honey. Yet, even in her terror she did not doubt that it was sufficient. The friendly things of earth had assured her of it. They had told her that there was greed even among the dead ; that Charon, the grim ferryman, whose boat none living might enter, could be bribed by a coin carried in her mouth ; that the body of an old man would rise from the waters of the Styx to

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implore unlawful aid ; that a company of aged women would seek her help to lighten their allotted tasks. And, as all these things had come to pass, she believed also that the watchdog of Persephone would be placated by her simple offering and that thus could she pass in safety the last barrier to the palace.

Bravely she threw down her sop to Cerberus and as he was devouring it stepped quickly past him, holding still in her mouth a coin and in her hand a cake wherewith to buy her safe return from the perilous lands.

Persephone, seated on the throne in the sombre magnificence of her judgment-hall, had expected the coming of Psyche. She was not ignorant of the story, told among gods and men, of how the anger of Aphrodite, Goddess and Queen of Love, pursued this mortal girl. They told how, not long since, men, on beholding her grace and simplicity, had forgotten their duty to Aphrodite and no longer sailed to Paphos and to Cýtherea to worship at the shrines of the goddess, but instead flocked to behold Psyche. Aphrodite thereupon called upon her son, Eros, to avenge her with his arrows by wounding Psyche with a consuming passion for the most base and ill-favoured of men. But when Eros, hastening to obey his mother's behest, gazed on Psyche, he himself fell captive to love of her. Zephyrus aiding, he carried her into a secret place hidden even from the watchful eye of his mother. There he made her his wife.

Now when a god marries a mortal it is ordained that she must never look on his face, and thus it was only under the cloak of night that Eros could visit Psyche. She, in the long days of

languor spent alone in the Hidden Valley, began to be assailed by distrustful thoughts. Who was this lover she might never see? Was he, perhaps, a monster sent for her destruction? His voice, she knew, was lovely as music, his skin as smooth as the petals of flowers. When she lay in his arms, she knew herself enfolded by a serene strength beyond the belief of the world. And yet, in the day, when the full sun made of night itself a fantastic dream, she doubted. . . .

At last one night just before dawn she stole up to her lover's couch, carrying in her hand a lighted lamp. When she saw before her the perfect face of Eros, her body was shaken with a great trembling, from the ecstasy of love and the fear of sacrilege. A drop of burning oil escaped from the lamp and fell on the god's shoulder and Eros, awakened by the pain of it, knew the ruin of their happiness.

Terrible was the wrath of Aphrodite when the truth could no longer be concealed and she learnt of the triple betrayal. Eros she kept in her palace to nurse until his shoulder should be healed, so that, for a space, none in the world of mortal men could feel the power of love. Of Zeus, King of the Gods, she demanded that Psyche, for her sins against love, should be delivered into her power to make some atonement. But Psyche, tortured by remorse and sick with desire for her lover, found even the fulfilment of Aphrodite's cruel tasks less irksome than the continuance of life itself.

All this Persephone knew and remembered as the frightened girl made obeisance before her and explained falteringly her

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mission : "Mighty Persephone, Queen of Death, my lady Aphrodite, Queen of Love, sends to you this casket and entreats that you will place therein a portion of your beauty. For she bids me tell you that her beauty has faded with the care of nursing her son Eros, who, through my fault, lies grievously sick."

Persephone, gravely smiling, took from Psyche the casket and entered an inner chamber where, secretly, she filled it. Silently she gave it back to her and motioned the girl to leave her presence.

When Psyche, clasping tightly her precious burden, had returned once more to the day, having again silenced Cerberus with a cake and bought Charon with a coin, she threw herself on the ground and kissed the grass and laughed and raised her face to Apollo for very joy in the sunlight. But the thought of Eros was never far from her and the hope of finding him at last. For him she would again dare Aphrodite and deck herself in the divine beauty which she held in her hands. But even as she lifted the casket's lid, a swift drowsiness oppressed her, her limbs became lead, the sun was blotted out, her tongue refused to utter her heart's last cry of "Eros." For the Beauty of Persephone was Death.

How Eros escaped from Aphrodite's keeping and by his power revived his beloved ; how the High Gods raised Psyche to the realm of the Immortals ; and how to the lovers was born a child named Desire is a tale which has often been told.

P A N

a n d

S Y R I N X



Pan and Syrinx

IN the quiet woods of Mount Lycæus Pan was dreaming—a day-dream bright with the colours of an Arcadian summer, sultry with stale heat, shot through with variable shadows. Around him was his kingdom. In the heart of the woods the wild creatures whom he loved were sleeping. Below the meadowland stretched far away to the brink of the river Ladon where grew surprising flowers. In the oases of shade shepherds and their flocks took their ease. The very winds were at rest. Only, in the distance, the heat-haze danced, evoking fantastic visions to mock serenity. Pan was lonely.

He gazed upward through the unswaying branches of the pine-tree at whose feet he lay, thinking of the mockery of his love. Once this tree had been Pithys whom he had desired and who, alone among the nymphs, had not repulsed him. But his rival Boreas had in anger seized her frail body and hurled it to death against the rock-strewn mountain side of Pan's domain. Nor could Pan save her. Only in answer to his wild prayer the gods changed the nymph into a pine-tree so that she might stand for ever defiant of Boreas, finding even in his hatred when his rude breath shook pitilessly her branches a tongue to whisper again to Pan of her love.

She was silent now ; neither Boreas nor Zephyr gave her voice. Pan, guarded by the shade of her, had only memory for

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comfort. Idly he contemplated his hooves, his shaggy legs and thighs. He knew his ugliness. The face which he had seen peering into his from a forest pool sickened him who so loved beauty ; goat's ears and horns ; a complexion sun-tanned and coarse ; the snub nose of a beast. Only in the enigmatic, desirous eyes which held the ultimate secrets of the world, was revealed the Pan whom Pithys had loved.

Outwardly indeed he was a thing for fear or laughter. His nurse had fled from him in horror ; on Olympus he was a butt for the jests of the gods ; the nymphs repulsed his advances with loathing ; even mortals, though they offered him prayers and, sacrifice, fled in terror if by chance they caught a glimpse of his eyes peering through the leaves. Pithys alone had seen the god in him and, divining something of his nature, had gladly surrendered herself to his will.

The sun abated. The meadowland became deserted. The edges of the shadows grew chill and a tiny breeze stirred the branches above him to intimate whispers. Of a sudden his body became an agony to him and, springing up, his goat-feet broke into a wild dance whose untamed rhythm echoed through the mountain forest, arousing all life, subtly communicating its madness to every creature. There was menace in it. Pan, Pan was abroad. To the uttermost corner of his mountain the warning spread, until it circled with fear a band of nymphs who were hunting on the upper slopes.

Among them was Syrinx, daughter of the river Ladon, she who was always first in the chase. Braver than her sisters she was

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now, even with the Panic terror throbbing in the air, the last to take flight. Though fear itself was to her a challenge, she was more surely armed. Against the vague menace she opposed the indifference of a nature in which was wanting the knowledge to comprehend the cause for fear. So she descended the mountain slowly, drawn irresistibly towards the centre of the storm and caring nothing that her companions were soon lost to sight.

More insistent grew the strange rhythm ; the atmosphere more stifling. A tiredness overcame her : she must rest. Then suddenly stumbling into an open glade, she found herself face to face with the god.

If she had never known fear before, she knew it then—fear so overpowering that momentarily her limbs refused her will and she stood as a thing of stone gazing into the eyes of Pan. The god, with a cry, stretched out his beautiful hands to take her. The spell was broken ; life came back to her and she turned and ran headlong down the mountain.

For a second Pan stood undecided ; then, at a whisper from Pithys, he set off in pursuit. Syrinx had reached the meadowland before she realized that Pan was following. The racing of her pulses drowned every other sound in her ears ; her one thought was to reach the river Ladon, her father, and in his cool serenity to find sanctuary from what she had seen in Pan's eyes. But when she glimpsed him behind her she knew that, fleet of foot as she was, she could never gain that refuge ; he would outdistance her. In all the wide plain there was no help to be seen from god, man or nymph, for none would dare to come between Pan the

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pursuer and his prey. Blindly she ran forward in courage without hope.

Pan, who knew his power, was disposed to cruelty. He let her reach the very brink of the river before she felt his hot breath on her shoulder and knew that her doom was upon her. She cried to her father to save her, she knew not how, and, having cried, stood motionless, half-swooning, until the touch of Pan's slender fingers on her naked arms should rouse her to a last struggle. But the god stood more still than the nymph ; in amazement he watched her body change before his eyes, until where Syrinx had been there was nothing but a cluster of cool green reeds shivering in the evening breeze. Ladon had heard his daughter's prayer.

When the moon rose above the mountain Pan was still gazing at the place where the nymph had escaped him. And as the wind played among the reeds he became aware of a strange music such as he had never heard before, a lament of unearthly loveliness, poignant with the burden of beauty unfulfilled, laden with remorse. And, very gently, he picked seven reeds and bound them together into a pipe on which his breath might play and so keep the music immortal. Then he returned to his mountain.

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In such a manner, they say, were made the pan-pipes.

Z E U S

a n d

E U R O P A

Zeus and Europa

EUROPA, daughter of Agenor, King of Tyre, was playing with her companions on the sea-shore when her beauty attracted the attention of Zeus, father of Gods and Men. He considered carefully the best means of approaching her, for he was an artist in love and disdained repetition.' To Danaë he had appeared as a shower of gold ; to Ægina as a flame of fire ; to Leda as a swan, and to Antiope as a satyr. In each case he had adapted himself to circumstances, and now, looking around on the peaceful landscape, where the green of the fields met the gold sand of the shore, he decided to adopt a disguise suited to the peaceful rusticity.

Suddenly Europa became aware of a milk-white bull in the corner of the second field. At first both she and her companions were uncertain of safety, for already the hand of man was disturbing the peacefulness of nature, and under the rule of her father, who had done much for the cause of progress, animals no longer lived happily side by side with mortals, as had been the way in the Golden Age.

Europa knew that a bull may sometimes charge ferociously at a mortal, but this white animal soon proved that fear was needless. It ran up to her and frolicked as gently as a lamb. It was as gentle as it was strong, and soon Europa, all misgivings banished, was stroking it and decking its head with flowers, while

it licked her neck as if to kiss her. Then it lay on its side in the field while she and her companions danced round it, now merrily, now sedately, as they had seen their elders do round the great black bull, which was offered yearly for sacrifice. At last, ever growing bolder, Europa mounted on its back. Immediately it rose and began to trot slowly towards the sea ; when it came to the shore, it did not hesitate, but plunged in and swam strongly far out into the ocean.

When they saw the Princess thus carried away, her attendants proceeded immediately to the Palace to report the unhappy news. The King called out in grief and wrath for his three sons, Cadmus, Phœnix and Cilix, and reproached them bitterly for having so carelessly guarded their sister. Their explanation that they were elsewhere at the time of the catastrophe was not accepted. Agenor banished them immediately from his sight, informing them that they might never return until they brought with them the lost Europa.

Thus from the far shore of Tyre the three Princes set forth, taking with them their mother, Telephassa, who refused to remain in the Palace, bereft now of all her children. Together they crossed the sea, but to which quarter they should direct the course of their vessel they did not know. When they reached land once more, they set off in different directions on their search, unguided by gods or men. The days grew to weeks, the weeks to months, and the months to years, and still there was no trace of the lost girl. It was Phœnix who tired of it first, and finding a pleasant tract of land, decided to go no further, but to stay

there and found for himself a kingdom. To this he gave his name, for it was known thereafter as Phœnicia.

His brother's example deeply stirred Cilix, who realized that the search was well nigh hopeless, and who, in addition, had lost any desire he once possessed to return to his father's court. If Phœnix could found a kingdom, so could he. So he, too, abandoned the weary quest, and remained in that land which is known as Cilicia. But Cadmus and his mother held on.

It was Death which made Telephassa halt. Nothing else could have stayed her, for she lived only for her daughter and in the hope of finding her again. That hope, some say, never left her, and it was only the infirmity of age which overcame her. But others have it that hope itself died when Cilix left her, and that after the one death, the other was certain.

Cadmus, having performed the last rites for his mother, and attended still by the few faithful servants who had followed him from his home, crossed the sea once more, and landed this time in the land of Greece. Of his adventures there and of how he founded the city of Thebes and incurred the wrath of the gods, but later made atonement; how he married the beautiful Harmonia, daughter of Aphrodite, and how in age the gods granted to him his prayer that he should cease to be man and become a serpent, in which guise he is still immortal, it is written in the story of Greece. But his sister, Europa, he never saw again, nor did he hear men or gods tell of what had befallen her.

But in truth she was not far from him, for on that day when the bull had taken her from her native land, he had swum to

the Island of Crete, and the journey had been one of triumph. Europa, at first terrified, then tearful, had gradually resigned herself to the inevitable, and was showing a lively interest in the attendants which the sea was providing. For behind them on the white foam track left by their passage nereids and dolphins gambolled, and beside them tritons were playing their horns. All night long the bull swam, and to soothe Europa's fears in the darkness a strange soft music filled the air. When daylight arrived, the Princess was once more on dry land. But she was alone. The bull had vanished as mysteriously as it had appeared.

To her, bringing her comfort, came the goddess Aphrodite, to tell her that Zeus himself was her suppliant, and for love had snatched her from her home. Europa found in this less comfort than Aphrodite had expected. The girl announced her intention of defying even Zeus unless she were immediately restored to her family. Aphrodite, who knew that the Father of Gods and Men himself was bound by his own laws and could not take Europa against her will, decided that an appeal to vanity was necessary. The method of it showed the goddess's understanding of the family of Agenor, for just as Phœnix and Cilix had preferred to become lords of new lands to carrying out the commands of their father, so Europa shared their taste for that form of notoriety. The discovery that two countries would perpetuate the names of Phœnix and Cilix through the centuries and that Cadmus would become one of the founders of the greatest of nations, aroused her envy. Aphrodite was scornful of it. If they should

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have countries, Europa should have a continent. Zeus would grant that. Europa assented.

In the hidden island, with Aphrodite for Priestess, the marriage of Zeus and Europa was celebrated. The girl, of course, was raised to divine rank, and the Cretans were taught to worship her as the goddess of Hellotis. It is improbable that she was happy. Certainly she was unfortunate in her children, for the sons of Zeus and Europa were Rhadamantos and Minos, the stern judges of the dead.

O R P H E U S
and
E U R Y D I C E



Orpheus and Eurydice

HROUGH the water-meadow which marked the limit of his father's domain, wandered Orpheus, son of Ægros, King of Thrace. He had spent the morning experimenting with new harmonies on his lyre and was now returning to ask Eurydice's opinion on his progress. He himself was not ill-pleased with it, but, as the repetition of practice dulls the ear and enthusiasm often blinds judgment, he could not be certain of his success until his wife had confirmed it. Her wisdom in these things had become necessary to him. To the minor triumphs of his music he had long been accustomed. Wild beasts grew tame at the sound of it ; trees would dance or despair as he chose to alter its mood ; the very rocks responded to its enchantment. But these he regarded as no more than fitting tributes to his unsurpassed skill, which, from one whose mother was the muse Calliope and whose lyre was a gift from Apollo himself, was to be expected. His care was that perfection was lacking ; there was some hidden magic of which he was not yet the master, some secret which his instrument still withheld.

He had come nearest to finding it in the days of his tempestuous wooing of Eurydice, when she had come to him drawn from her mountain home by the spell of his song. Since then all his music had been for her, yet even his surest inspiration could not express the full measure of their happiness. At first

it had not mattered ; love alone was sufficiently splendid. But gradually this limitation of his art annoyed him. He came to regard it as in some way a failure of love. For days together he would withdraw from his wife, hiding himself in woods and fields, with no companion but his lyre.

It did not occur to him that, by his absence, he was exposing Eurydice to danger. Nor did she, for fear of hindering his music, tell him that Aristæus, a neighbouring prince, was amorous of her beauty. With a woman's wit she fought her battle alone with the unwelcome lover until the day when she judged that safety could be secured only by flight. Knowing that Orpheus was in the water-meadow, she ran in the direction of the river, Aristæus pursuing. But she never reached him. When she was just within sound of his music, a serpent coiled in the grass struck suddenly at her heel. Aristæus saw her drop and, thinking it was exhaustion, quickened his pace to reach her before she could recover. He found it was death. There was no one in sight. He stole away unobserved.

When Orpheus, returning, found Eurydice he imagined that she was asleep and decided to rouse her gently by his new song. Then she would tell him, with the involuntary honesty of the newly-awakened, her true opinion of it. Very quietly, as one crooning a lullaby, he began it. As the strains grew louder and more impassioned and still his wife did not stir, he became uneasy, divining the truth.

At last he realized that she was dead and in that moment grief unseated his reason. One thought only beat in his brain.

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Eurydice must hear the song he had made for her and if Eurydice was in the far land of Hades, to Hades he must go. He knew that to gain entry there was not difficult. To re-join his beloved he had but to sacrifice his life. But that would defeat his purpose. Dead men made no songs. With his lyre he must enter the gloomy kingdom alive.

He set off on his dangerous journey sure of his strength, for indeed, the magic of his music had gained potency from sorrow. At the gateway of Hades the rocks parted to give easier entrance to the sound and Cerberus, the fierce watchdog, was overcome by its loveliness. So without hindrance he came to the throne of Pluto and Persephone. To them he made his plea. He sang of the might of love and the joy of life. Through his music throbbed the urgency which had once driven Pluto to defy his fellow-gods and snatch Persephone for his bride ; and to Persephone it brought once more the scent of the flower-starred meadows of Enna till she felt again the caressing breeze of the upper earth. So the rulers of Hades were disturbed by forgotten longings. But in the music was no reconciliation, for it lacked that ultimate harmony wherein the unrest of love is vanquished by its strength and the beauty of life triumphantly outfaces death. Nevertheless they granted Orpheus this boon—that Eurydice should follow him back to earth if he would neither speak to her nor turn to look at her until he had passed the last portal of Hades—and he left their presence exulting, with the note of achievement and victory swelling his song.

As he came in sight of the sky, the song ceased. He had

reached the climax of it and knew at last that his mastery was attained. Oblivious to everything else, Orpheus turned to embrace Eurydice and share with her his triumph. Too late he perceived in terror that her sad eyes reproached him for his weakness. Too late he realized that he had lost her for ever now. His outstretched arms held only the empty air where hovered for an instant the wraith of his beloved.


In vain he pleaded for re-admission. The gates of Hades were adamant against him. Slowly, with his lyre, he made his way to that far-off mountain where Eurydice had once lived and there, removed from human habitation, he solaced himself with the melodies which she had last heard. Occasionally he would mar their sweetness by a wild, discordant rage against the gods of death.

But the gods had been kinder than he knew. They had given him a little comfort. In Hades Persephone called Eurydice to her and together they forgot their exile in speaking of the earth which they had so dearly loved. And Pluto told her how, for his sin, Aristæus had sacrificed four bulls and four heifers. But of Orpheus and his visit neither Pluto nor Persephone spoke, nor did Eurydice know anything of it. For the truth of the matter was as the philosopher Plato told it, centuries after : “ Exceedingly do the gods honour the zeal and virtue springing from Love. But Orpheus, son of Ægros, they sent empty away from Hades, when they had shown him only the image of the wife whom he sought and they would not surrender. For he seemed a soft shape in their eyes, like the musician he was, not daring to die for love, but contriving to worm himself alive into Hades.”

C I R C E

and

O D Y S S E U S

Circe and Odysseus

EURYLOCHUS, hastening back to the ship, brought to Odysseus the news of the disaster. Of the twenty-two men who had set out with him, none returned. Instead, twenty-two swine of nine seasons old rooted for acorns and mast in a sty at the gates of Circe's palace. He told Odysseus how it had befallen.

They had gone up through the tangled paths of the island to the great palace which stood at the heart of it. As they approached they heard the sound of a sweet song which Circe of the Braided Tresses sang as she worked at her great web of tapestry. On the advice of Polites (dearest companion of Odysseus), they called loudly to her. Immediately the massive gates, fiery in the sunset, swung open and Circe, inscrutably smiling, appeared on the threshold to bid them welcome. Heedless of danger, they went in. Eurylochus alone, suspecting a trap, remained outside. Creeping cautiously round the palace, he gained a position from which he could see into the great hall, where his companions were seated at a long table eating a dish of cheese and barley-meal and honey with Pramnian wine. But with it Circe had mixed a drug which made them altogether forget their land and their loyalty. So, being disarmed in their mind, they fell an easy prey to the potion which presently she served them in golden cups. Immediately they had drunk it they became swine. Circe,

having ordered the herdsman to drive them into a new sty, returned laughing to her tapestry.

Odysseus listened to the narration sick at heart. For an instant he was undecided. Then he sprang to his feet, girt on his sword—that great blade of bronze—and bade Eurylochus lead him to the lair of Circe. But Eurylochus was unmanned. Also, having seen enchantment, he was sceptical about the efficacy of force. He prayed Odysseus not to venture on the island but to set sail immediately with the men that were left in the ship, lest doom should overtake the whole company. Odysseus refused to listen to his fears, but saw that they were genuine enough to make him no fit comrade at that juncture. He left him in charge of the ship and set forth alone.

At the edge of the grounds of the palace the god Hermes met him in the guise of a beardless youth. There was no ceremony ; they clasped hands merely. Hermes assured him that the fears of Eurylochus were not idle and that against Circe's enchantment even the wisdom and daring of Odysseus of the Many Devices could not prevail. Nevertheless, Odysseus affirmed his intention of going on. Hermes, approving his spirit, offered divine aid.

Close to where they stood grew a spray of that plant which the gods call moly, whose flower is of the purest white and whose root is of the deepest black. But the root is seldom seen by man, because it is too hard for mortal hands to dig. Without effort Hermes pulled up a root and gave it to Odysseus, explaining that it had a potency against which even Circe's art was powerless. Then he left him.

Circe, from one of the windows of the palace, saw Odysseus afar off. She supposed him, from his appearance, to be another of the company which had already visited her and decided that he should shortly join it. There was something of the nobility of the lion in his bearing which made it particularly desirable that he should be changed into an ungainly and cowardly pig. She was too conscientious a sorceress to neglect the cruelty of contrast.

And so when Odysseus arrived at the inner gates he had no need to demand admittance, for Circe was standing there radiant, clothed in red and gold, as became a daughter of Helios, the Sun God. But her eyes were cool and inviting, and, as she welcomed him, her soft voice held a promise of peace. He explained that he was an unfortunate traveller lost on the island who, having seen smoke rising among the trees, had made his way thither to crave food and shelter. Circe called her attendants, who were born of the springs and the woods and the sacred rivers, and bade them quickly prepare a feast for the wanderer. Then she led him to a couch so that he might rest while with her own hands she mixed him a cup of rare and refreshing wine.

Odysseus watched her with narrowing eyes. Beneath his tunic the herb moly lay against his skin, roughly. Through the window came the sounds of swine grunting and a great wave of hatred shook him, so that involuntarily he drew his sword and would have risen from the couch to kill her where she stood. But Circe, divining his action, turned suddenly and threw herself on the couch beside him and with soft words entreated him to

drink the wine she had prepared. And he, remembering that the death of Circe could in no wise restore his men, obeyed her, pledging the beauty of her eyes.

When the cup was empty, she smote him on the face saying : "Go now to the sty and couch yourself with the rest of your company." But Odysseus remained unchanged and Circe in terror threw herself at his feet, praying to escape death at his hands. He granted her life on condition that immediately she restored his men to their proper shape.

So Circe went out into the sty, Odysseus following, and anointed each of the swine with another charm, so that he became a man again, younger and taller and stronger than he had been. One by one they greeted their leader in a silence imposed by great joy and thankfulness. Then with Circe they went once more into the palace to be refreshed without danger.

But Odysseus returned to the ship to tell Eurylochus and the men with him the glad tidings. With a shout of joy they leapt ashore and raced hot-foot to the palace. But Eurylochus was still doubtful and it was only by threats that Odysseus made him set foot again on the island of Circe. He feared another magic and was anxious to set sail before it hindered them.

Events justified him, though he had not foreseen the nature of it. For a year they lingered on the island and then set sail again on their long and adventurous voyage.

J A S O N

and

M E D E A



Jason and Medea

THE descendants of the Sun God were skilled in all the arts of magic. For this reason they considered themselves a race set apart and were so considered by men. Indeed, "all those of the race of Helios were plain to discern, since by the far-flashing of their eyes they shot in front of them a gleam of gold." Most famous was Circe, daughter of the god, who in her lonely island of *Aeëa* cast her spells over travellers unfortunate enough to visit its shores. Most feared was her niece, Hecate, who, as each moon was born, strode the world bringing terror and death to all who saw her and who, night by night, sent dreams and phantoms to trouble the sleep of men. But most unfortunate was their kinswoman, Medea, who lived on the further shores of the Friendless Sea and whose magic encountered a greater power which led her to betrayal and defeat.

Before the coming of Jason, Medea was as scrupulous as Hecate in the observance of her priestly rites, as remote as Circe from the affairs of men. When she heard from her father, Aëtes, that a young stranger with fifty companions was sailing in the ship *Argo* to visit their land, she showed so little interest in the matter that Aëtes, who wanted her advice, had to pursue the subject unasked. He told her that the object of the expedition led by Jason was to gain possession of the Golden Fleece, that

sacred trophy which adorned the tree by the great gate of the palace.

On learning this, the storm of Medea's wrath broke. Against the sacrilegious invaders she proclaimed immortal hatred and prepared to use all the resources of her magic to defeat their purpose. Together she and her father prepared a reception for Jason. He was to be welcomed with all courtesy and his request for the Fleece was to be granted on one condition only—that he showed himself worthy to possess it. For proof he should yoke the two bulls of Aeetes and with them plough a field, sow it with seed and reap the harvest, and, finally, overcome the guardian of the treasure. These tasks were to be accomplished between sunrise and sunset.

It was evening when Jason arrived. Aeetes alone received him, for Medea was at that hour in the temple, praying for his destruction. With no sign of fear he heard the conditions and agreed to undergo the test on the morrow. But in his heart he knew that he must die. For the bulls of Aeetes had hooves and horns of brass and their breath was fire ; the field he must plough was the sacred field of Ares, God of War, which had never been tilled by man ; the seeds he was to sow were the teeth of a dragon whose harvest would be an armed multitude ; and the guardian of the Golden Fleece was a fierce dragon which never slept.

When Aeetes had departed to his palace, exulting, and Jason's companions had returned in sorrow to their camp by the river, Jason went slowly towards the temple. He was perplexed. From the High Gods he had received the command to recover

the Fleece ; to them he turned now in his danger, for, though he saw no hope of success, he did not believe that they had purposed his doom. So it was that on the threshold of the temple, in the half-light stifling with incense, Jason and Medea came face to face. That moment sealed his victory and her ruin. Her eyes, golden-glancing, dropped before his cool gaze. Her hands, cleansed from earthly pollution by the blood of the sacrifices, yearned for surrender to his strong grasp. Her heart, steeled against him by hatred and pride, failed her and her magic fell from her mind, leaving her defenceless. Without the need of words she was in his arms. And at midnight, before the altar of Hecate, Jason and Medea swore an oath of undying fidelity.

She thought now only of the danger that threatened them. With her aid he could easily accomplish the tasks, but in the day before her father's court she dared not give it if she valued her own life. Nor, having woven the spell about the Fleece so that it could be obtained only by the performance of the tasks, could she undo for love what she had done from hate. One way only was left. The city would be astir at sunrise ; by sunrise she, with Jason and the Fleece, must be aboard the *Argo*, beyond the reach of vengeance. Quickly she gave Jason an ointment which, rubbed on his body, would protect him against the fiery breath of the bulls, and a potion to drink which would endow him with the strength of a god. Together they entered the field where the beasts were.

Under a sky barren of stars, Medea stood a little apart, uttering an incantation, her hands raised above her head as a

priestess raises them. But, because the anxiety of love had made her doubt her power, she could not take her eyes from Jason. She need not have feared for success. Her lover, sure in the super-human strength she had given him, caught the bulls each by a horn and bent them to his will.

When the field was ploughed and sown and the menacing army confronted Jason, Medea whispered to him that he should throw a great stone among them. The soldiers, thinking some of their number responsible for this, turned their weapons against each other and were soon utterly destroyed. Then over the dragon Medea cast a spell of sleep so that with safety Jason could pass it and rob the tree of its golden trophy. In the darkest hour just before the dawn, the *Argo* set sail.

To Jason that moment was the crown of his adventure ; to Medea it was the final triumph of love. But she had forgotten that the High Gods do not forgive those who break faith. Her passion for Jason blinded her to her own treachery and her magic was potent enough to delay the reckoning. For him, when at last they reached his kingdom, she restored youth to his father and by her enchantments overcame all his enemies. For him she murdered her own brother. Yet not her love or her sacrifices or her power could hold him and, when Jason broke the vow they had sworn at Hecate's altar, madness descended on her and before his eyes she killed two of the children she had borne him. Then she disappeared from men's sight.

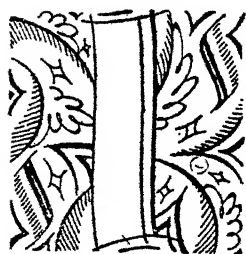
But some of the ancient writers held that, after the murder of her children, she sought again her home on the further shore of

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the Friendless Sea and in the temple expiated her crime until the High Gods lifted from her the curse which is the punishment of treason. And there Jason, drawn by no magic save that of love, came once more to seek her and to renew his oath at the altar of Hecate.

H E R A K L E S.
a n d
D E I A N E I R A



Herakles and Deianeira

It was unfortunate that Herakles so often forgot his strength. When the boy Eunomus was serving him at the banquet in celebration of his marriage, he slapped him by way of reproof because the lad had poured the water intended for the footbath over his hands. The blow killed him. Herakles, who always obeyed the law imposed by the High Gods, knew that he must betake himself into banishment. His only consolation was that his new wife, Deianeira, could accompany him.

The wooing of her had been satisfactory, although the difficulty of it was so slight that it could be reckoned only as a minor task in Herakles' career. In fact, he assumed it as a mere "incident in his journey"—a phrase which he out of modesty continually used to describe comparatively trivial exploits.

Deianeira, the daughter of Ceneus, King of Ætolia, had for years been persistently wooed by the river, Achelous. The girl was not happy about it: the father was afraid. And there seemed no escape but for the opportune appearance of Herakles. Seeing that Deianeira was beautiful, the hero offered his services; knowing his strength, he had no doubt of the outcome. He had subdued things stronger than rivers; on one occasion indeed he had bent a river to his will with the utmost ease in order to clean a stable. Deianeira and her father, however, knew that Achelous

was no ordinary river : a stream of water was but one of his shapes, and the combat between the two suitors had been in progress but a very short time when Herakles was overcome with astonishment. For; finding the power of water insufficient, Achelous suddenly changed himself into a serpent, eluding with great skill the repeated blows of Herakles' club. Herakles, warming to his work, and stooping slightly, was amazed to find the serpent vanished; and in its place a bull rushing at him. He was so surprised that he dropped his club. His hands, however, were sufficiently strong, and, grasping the right horn of the bull with his left, he uprooted the other horn from the River God's forehead, whereon Achelous gave up the struggle, and Herakles, full of joy at his deed, went proudly up to Deianeira, holding out to her the trophy as his nuptial gift.

The marriage was celebrated with elaborate ritual, and the general happiness of the entire company was marred only by the unfortunate accident to Eunomus. •

Nevertheless, Herakles found the first few days of his journey into exile satisfactory, and Deianeira, although she knew something of the story of her predecessors in the hero's affections, was certain that for the moment she held him in thralldom. There were doubts, of course. With a man with the reputation of Herakles, they could never be entirely banished.

It was another river that precipitated the crisis. In order to cross the boundaries of the territory from which they were banished, they had to cross the river Evenus, which was at that time of the year in full flood. To find a means of transport was beyond the

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ingenuity of Herakles. In the solitary landscape was no sign of either bridge or boat. While they were meditating on the best course to pursue, they espied in the distance a centaur, one of that race, half-man, half-horse, who were gradually becoming extinct, but who, in proportion as their numbers decreased, had an increasing reputation for wisdom. Nor was it undeserved, for the centaurs were older than man and of a higher intelligence, for they had gained by diligent search many of those secrets which the High Gods hid from mortals, and which mortals were too obtuse or too indolent to fathom. Nessus had retired into the solitary country on the borders of Trachis to meditate on the mysteries, which, in the course of a long and active life, he had discovered. It was seldom that he saw either mortals or creatures of his own kind, and the sight of Herakles and Deianeira stirred his curiosity.

Herakles explained their plight, whereon Nessus offered his services to convey them across the river. But it was obviously impossible to carry both together. He would take Deianeira first. Herakles watching from the bank, thought that they were taking longer than necessary in crossing the river; and as they reached the further shore, a wild cry from Deianeira confirmed his suspicions. With that promptitude which had characterized all his actions, and which had made him so conspicuous a success as a hero, he decided to take no risks. Choosing carefully a poisoned arrow from his quiver, he shot Nessus in the back. The wound was not immediately mortal. Nessus managed to gain the bank, and to lay Deianeira gently on the grass. Then,

as his life-blood ebbed away, he told her how he had died for love. He told her also that she herself might be brought to an extremity of love at no very distant date (for her fidelity to Herakles had told him all he needed to know of her affections). And that he might serve her dying, he whispered with his last breath the secret of the centaurs, that their blood was a love charm, that any garment that it had stained had the power to restore faithless lovers to their allegiance. Smiling, he touched Deianeira's dress, on which some of his blood had fallen, and assured her that should Herakles ever tire of her, she was to send it to him as a token. Before Herakles reached them, Nessus was dead.

It was not long before Deianeira had occasion to remember the last words of the centaur. Herakles too soon forgot his brief infatuation for his young wife, and paid court to Iole, in whose honour he offered an amazing sacrifice to the Gods. That was the occasion which Deianeira chose to send him her robe as a remembrance of happier days. But Herakles, in the throes of a new love, was insolent about the old. In mockery, he threw the robe round his own shoulders to hear Iole's pleased laughter. The laughter was short. The poison did its work, and Herakles died in agony before his own altar.

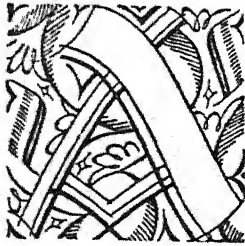
When the news was brought to Deianeira, she was incredulous. It seemed impossible that Herakles could die, and the knowledge that she was responsible filled her with a self-loathing that only her own death could cure. But before she joined her husband in the dim region of the shades, she prayed that she might share the secret which Nessus had kept. Had he known

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of the poison, and was this the vengeance of jealousy? Or had he in death made, unselfishly, a last effort for her happiness? By whose hand had Herakles died? But the High Gods vouchsafed no answer.

P E R S E U S
a n d
A N D R O M E D A



Perseus and Andromeda

ANDROMEDA was not fortunate in her family. She was the daughter of Cepheus, King of Ethiopia. In his youth he had sailed with Jason in quest of the Golden Fleece, but, except as material for an interminable series of anecdotes, that immortal voyage had been unprofitable to him. As a ruler he was amiable but weak. He was quite incapable even of coping with his kinsman, Phineus, who wished to marry Andromeda. What opposition to the plan there was came from the girl herself and her mother Cassiope. Andromeda considered her suitor too old and uninteresting; secretly she dreamed of some young and beautiful stranger who would appear suddenly and carry her off by force; Phineus, in any case, was not intended by nature for the part of knight-errant. Cassiope, though she adored her daughter and agreed with her about the marriage, did not share her reasons. Her objections to Phineus were of a more practical nature and sprang from a dislike and distrust of all her husband's relatives; also she considered that Andromeda, who had inherited some of her beauty, was worthy of a better match.

It was Cassiope's beauty which precipitated the crisis that provided Cepheus with a graver problem than holding the balance between his kinsman and his family. Cassiope, one unfortunate afternoon, announced that she was more beautiful

than the Nereids. One of them overheard her and reported the matter to Poseidon, God of the Sea, demanding that, for the honour of the nymphs, vengeance should overtake the impious mortal. Poseidon, who was easily angered in matters touching the honour of his subjects, acted promptly and overwhelmed Ethiopia with a flood. Deeming that insufficient punishment (for there were many survivors), he then sent a Beast of enormous proportions and unpleasant aspect to ravage the land. Cepheus, in a panic, faced with famine and rebellion, consulted the most reliable oracles. They were unanimous in their instructions; the wrath of Poseidon could be appeased only if Andromeda was sacrificed, living, to the Beast. Cassiope, distraught, offered herself in her daughter's place. She pointed out that as the fault was hers, hers should be the atonement. But the logic of it was useless; the oracles re-affirmed that Poseidon had appointed Andromeda and that nothing else would avail.

Andromeda, without much hope, appealed to Phineus to save her. Perhaps, inspired by love of her, he could kill the Beast? Phineus, protesting his willingness to do anything within reason, reminded Andromeda that the Beast had already exterminated a regiment which had been sent against it. He was, quite genuinely, upset about the matter.

They bound Andromeda to a rock at the northern extremity of the coast, close to the Beast's lair. High above, on the grass at the cliff's edge, they made a rude altar and, prostrating themselves, implored the gods to relent at last. Andromeda knew nothing of this, but gazed in terror at the sea and hoped that she

might lose her senses before the Beast appeared. She was a king's daughter, but she could hardly be expected to meet this death as became one.

She did not see that apparition in the sky which gave a wild hope to the watchers above. Cassiope was the first to notice it—a mere speck in the distance like a large bird flying slowly. As it drew nearer they saw it had human shape. They decided that it must be Hermes, Messenger of the Gods, sent by Zeus in answer to their prayers. Only he, who wore the *talaria*, the winged sandals, could so travel through the air. And the sun blazed so brilliantly from the sword he carried that it must surely be the *herpe*, Hermes' famous dagger of diamonds. Cepheus in tears, gave inarticulate thanks for the deliverance and prepared to welcome the god with what dignity he could muster.

But, though the new-comer did indeed wear the *talaria* and was in fact armed with the *herpe*, it was not Hermes who came, but Perseus, a young adventurer. He was returning home from the killing of the Gorgon, Medusa, whose head he carried concealed under his serviceable mantle. (The precaution was most necessary as whoever looked on it was immediately turned to stone.) For this singular achievement Hermes had lent his invaluable aid; but for the divine sword and sandals Medusa would still have been alive and Perseus a stone effigy. The young hero was in no hurry to reach his native land. He found his temporary power too pleasant to relinquish an hour before he need. Consequently he stopped by the way as often as there

seemed a reasonable excuse such as that offered by the sight of the little crowd gathered at the cliff's edge.

He explained courteously his name and deeds. Cepheus though disappointed that he was not Hermes, considered that his aid might serve to avert disaster and hastily outlined the situation. Perseus stepped back into space and hovered in mid-air for a moment or two, gazing at Andromeda. Still she did not see him. Her eyes were fixed on the Beast's head which began slowly to appear through the waves. The matter was urgent. Perseus agreed to save the girl if, afterwards, he might marry her. Cepheus and Cassiope screamed assent. No one paid any attention to Phineus' remark that she was betrothed to him.

Not an instant too soon Perseus swooped to the rescue. Andromeda was crouching back into the unyielding rock, her frail body pitifully seeking escape from the hideous doom, when from the skies the dreamed-of hero appeared. Her fear, she decided, must have made her mad already. Not until the Beast floated lifeless on the waves, slain by one stroke of the *herpe*, did she realize her deliverance. As Perseus released her from her bonds, she fainted in his arms.

The marriage-feast was an elaborate affair. They raised a magnificent altar to Hermes and sacrificed an unblemished calf. Nevertheless the festivities were marred, as might have been foreseen, by Phineus who entered the palace secretly with a band of armed men and fell upon Perseus. His death seemed certain. But they had forgotten the head of Medusa. Perseus exhibited his trophy and they were turned to stone.

G O D S A N D M O R T A L S I N L O V E

No one lamented Phineus, but the people of Ethiopia were sorrowful indeed when the time came for their princess to depart from them. She herself was not sorry to go ; her memories of the place were not happy. Besides, she had thought for nothing but Perseus and the fulfilment of dreams.